

My Dear Parish Family,

This Friday October 31st is Halloween and I wanted to let all the families know that I will be distributing goodies to the children who are out trick or treating. I will be passing out vegetables and other healthy things (just kidding, I will be passing out candy), so it would be great to see everyone if you are able to stop by the rectory in Maple Grove.

Halloween has turned into a big business in the United States. It has become so popular that it is beginning to rival the amount of money that people spend at Christmas time. That's why it is always good to understand what is Halloween really stands for while we engage in innocent fun with certain traditions.

Its meaning is liturgical and not really a secular holiday. Halloween is a shortened word for All Hallows Eve. To translate, it means the Eve of All the Saints. The root of the word of Halloween is Hallowed which means holy. We see that word used in the Lord's Prayer, *hallowed be thy name* and so we see the purpose of this day.

The Vigil of All the Saints (All Hallows Eve) begins the night before All Saints Day on November 1st where we honor all the Saints in Heaven. And so All Hallows Eve is a liturgical vigil in its own right preparing for the Feast Day.

Remembering that, what are some things that you can do as parents on Halloween? Here are some examples that some parents have done. They have had their children dress up as Catholic Saints and put on nametags of the saint that they dressed up as so that the houses they would visit for trick or treating would know who they are. Then after they received candy, they would give a little thank you note to the people saying that they would pray at the upcoming Mass for All Souls Day on November 2nd for the repose of the soul of their family members who have died. Notice what they did there; they were preparing for All Saints and All Souls Day during Halloween.

One older couple when the trick or treaters would come over they would in addition to handing out candy, would give the children Holy Cards of the saints. Others instead of putting up witches or other things like that, would put up a cross near the area that the trick or treaters would come up to the house with the message, *The souls of the just are in the hand of God.*

Instead of carving pumpkins with scary images on them you could carve the Cross or other holy things. With the Cross you could have the message near it that says Christ is the Light of the world.

Your children can also be great evangelizers at school when they have dress up day for Halloween. Have them go as one of the saints and then they could have the opportunity to explain to their friends or other children who they are and why they are a saint in heaven. It is a great way to evangelize.

A good rule of thumb in celebrating the secular side of Halloween is to make sure that we put more effort and excitement into celebrating the Feast of All Saints Day and also the Feast of All Souls on November 2nd. It is enjoying some of our American traditions that we have, but always remembering the focus of these Feast Days.

This Saturday is the Solemnity of All Saints. It is a glorious Feast Day where we celebrate all the Saints in Heaven, even those who are not canonized by the Church. When this Solemnity falls on a Saturday or a Monday the obligation to attend Mass is removed and so this year with it falling on a Saturday it is not a Holy Day of Obligation, but we will still have Mass offered at St. Michael's at 9AM. This Feast Day reminds us that we need all the help we can get from the prayers of the saints in Heaven, especially in our day and age with our culture getting further and further away from God.

All you angels and saints hear our prayers and may we be found worthy to be with you for all eternity in Heaven. Amen.

May God Bless you and Mary keep you,
Fr. Christopher Coman